on the 8th December 2005 and state:

(a) whether Government of Pakistan have responded to the proposal of our Government to expand the 1974 bilateral protocol to increase the number of shrines and pilgrims in both the countries;

(b) if so, the names of the new shrines in both the countries added to the earlier list and other related details regarding the number of pilgrims from both the countries allowed to visit the shrines; and

(c) if not, the follow up action that is proposed to be taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) There has been no substantive response from Pakistan to the Indian proposal. The matters related to expansion of the bilateral 'Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines-1974' will be discussed during the forthcoming Secretary (Culture) level talks in the third round of Composite Dialogue under 'Promotion of Friendly Exchanges in Various Fields'.

Promotion policy for IFS officers

1049. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:
SHRI AMAR SINGH:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to revise the promotion policy for the officers of the Indian Foreign Services;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when it is likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ANAND SHARMA): (a) No decision has been taken by the Government to revise the promotion policy for the officers of the Indian Foreign Service.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Relationship with Nepal

1050. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:
SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether our relationship with the Nepal have been steadily

deteriorating ever since King Gyanendra had assumed direct control of the Nepalese Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) what are the outstanding issues standing in the way of Indo-Nepalese relations and the steps proposed to solve them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) The direct takeover by King Gyanendra of Nepal after dissolution of the multi-party Government and subsequent declaration of emergency and suspension of fundamental rights constituted a setback to our relations with Nepal. Since February 1, 2005, India has consistently maintained that the constitutional forces within Nepal must work together with a view to find a peaceful democratic political solution to the challenges facing Nepal, foremost among which is the Maoist insurgency.

(c) India has maintained an ongoing dialogue with Nepal to address issues relating to our mutual economic, commercial and security concerns keeping in view our open border and the prevailing situation in Nepal.

Desalination plants in coastal areas

†1051. SHRIMATI MAYA SINGH: Will the Minister of OCEAN DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to set up treatment plants in coastal areas to treat the saline water to provide drinking water to the people;

(b) if so, whether the sites for the purpose have been identified and if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the progress made so far?

THE MINISTER OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) to (c) The Department of Ocean Development is involved in design, development, demonstration and commission of Low Temperature Thermal Desalination (LTTD) Plants for conversion of saline water into drinking water.

One such plant with a capacity of 1 lakh liter/day was installed in May, 2005 in Kavaratti, Lakshadweep to provide fresh water. This is a land based plant.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.